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**An Incremental
Approach to ITIL v3**

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ITIL v3: A Service-based Approach

The IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) has enjoyed widespread adoption since it was first published almost two decades ago as an IT Service Management (ITSM) best practices framework. ITIL provides a framework for consistent, repeatable, and controllable processes for the delivery of services that enables organizations to improve the quality of service while managing operational costs and capital investments. ITIL provides a comprehensive structure for IT organizations to align all services with business requirements. ITIL also provides the framework for transforming a traditional IT organization into a service-oriented organization.

ITIL v2 was spurred by the need to provide a consistent framework for the delivery of IT services as IT grew out of its role as a provider of telephony and compute services for limited numbers of people to become a provider of critical information services for the corporation. As the demands for IT have grown to the point where dips in IT services can mean the loss of competitive edge or even the downfall of many organizations, IT must provide predictable, efficient, and effective services, as well as be able to respond when new business opportunities surface. As business demands and dependence on IT have grown, ITIL v2 has also evolved from treating IT as a separate provider of services to being an integrated partner in the company's business services and product delivery, ITIL v3.

ITIL v3 calls for a change in the way IT leaders approach data center management as it brings a focus on the services lifecycle and demands change in the IT corporate culture. A key principle of ITIL v3 is that of a service lifecycle which has, at its core, an IT service strategy. The service strategy articulates the IT services needed to achieve business objectives.

Achieving the ITIL v3 end-state vision may require significant change to the IT organization. The new model emphasizes IT's interaction with stakeholders, transforming IT from a support organization to a true service partner aligned with the business. While desirable, the transformation to ITIL v3 is not simple as it requires IT to change from being a reactive service provider to being an integral business solutions partner, making v3 adoption especially challenging in today's economic climate.

Because of this, IT managers need to adopt a pragmatic approach to v3. Fortunately, cost-constrained organizations can reap significant benefits from the core services in the short term while keeping the ITIL v3 enhancements in their sights over the long term.

An Incremental Approach

An organization can reap significant short-term benefits by taking incremental steps to implement ITIL v3, beginning with the Services Portfolio, and progressing, over time, to other aspects of the framework. Adopting ITIL v3 is not an "all or nothing" decision. New adopters should begin by establishing goals and conducting an assessment of current capability. A gap analysis and implementation roadmap will guide future investment in training and technology. Because ITIL v3 builds on v2, existing ITIL shops can leverage current implementations.

The ITIL v3 Services Portfolio drives the development of a "business service catalog," which presents services in customer-centric fashion. This catalog augments the "technical service catalog," which provides the internal specifications needed by IT and its suppliers. These catalogs serve as the foundation for structured, tiered delivery of services as IT aligns itself with varying levels of business service requirements.

By focusing on technical service catalogs for “core IT services,” the organization can reap the most significant short-term benefit. These catalogs should focus on key infrastructure components, e.g., servers, storage, networks, and facilities. Once business stakeholders agree on the service levels required from these components, it is possible to break out the components into discrete service catalogs and focus on those with the greatest business impact. Because developing technical service catalogs involves aligning technical architectures to meet business requirements, the catalogs support a more cost-efficient infrastructure.

Beginning with service catalog management, IT can:

- Differentiate service levels to meet a range of business needs and price points
- Drive a reference architecture to define service costs
- Standardize and simplify IT services that are optimized for capabilities and cost
- Institutionalize knowledge to eliminate the “smart person” problem
- Prepare operations for value-creating service delivery

The development of technical service catalogs is a practical priority for IT organizations attempting to gain short-term benefits from ITIL v3. Because the service catalogs capture business requirements, the larger service strategy can be built upon the work done to develop the catalogs.

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